

If you are receiving this response, you are a local area resident or have submitted reasonable questions or comments in reference to incidents involving the Bermea family in Gilbert, Arizona and the associated police response.

Our police department, community and I have been subjected to claims of bias, prejudice, hate and other various forms of slanderous and offensive comments, which I will not repeat. Nothing is further from the truth. Gilbert is a community with an estimated population of 220,000 people. We are a diverse community that welcomes people of all races, religions and beliefs, with open arms. We take great pride in our quality of life and low crime rates, with a community motto of Clean, Safe and Vibrant. We are not perfect and crime and offensive conduct by a limited number of our residents does occur. We work very hard to partner with our community to prevent crime and to bring persons to justice who commits crime. I have committed my life to public service and protecting the rights and freedoms of our citizens, with over 36 years of military service as a National Guard officer and more than 36 years of service as a law enforcement officer. My service includes a year in the deserts of Iraq where I fought to protect our freedoms and way of life. I take great pride in treating people with respect, even when we disagree.

I assure you that we are taking these incidents seriously and have committed significant manpower, funding and other resources to this investigation and to address issues in this neighborhood. We have committed these resources based on concerns of the Bermea family. **I strongly believe that no resident of our community should feel harassed or unsafe in their home, regardless of their beliefs, race or religion.** I would very much like to be able to identify the persons responsible for these offenses. We are investigating the crimes of residential trespass and harassment. I can understand why the Bermea family may feel that they are being subjected to harassment because of their beliefs, which they believe makes these offenses a hate crime. These offense do not meet the legal definition of a hate crime, which has been confirmed by the FBI and the Anti Defamation League. There has been no direct contact with family members. There have been no threats of violence or phrases used in regard to race, sex, religion or sexual orientation. The written phrases are understandably offensive. Our investigation must be based on facts, evidence, and the law, not on emotion, perceptions and opinions.

We have deployed bike team officers, who are also School Resource Officers, into the neighborhood as deterrence and to contact neighbors and juveniles in an attempt to identify potential suspects and develop potential leads. The HOA has been contacted. We have been conducting surveillance. I cannot provide details on surveillance operations as this case is still active and we are still conducting surveillance in the area. I have directed that a supervisor respond to any calls for service at the residence or involving the Bermea family in order to improve communications and customer service. We are continuing to meet with the family in an attempt to address their concerns.

I have attached a summary of the incidents involving the Bermea family and actions taken by our officers and detectives. This summary was prepared based on a review of police reports and call for service records, which are all documented. I am doing so to provide you factual information in order for you to make informed decisions and to address questions and concerns.

There is a significant amount of misinformation being distributed over the Internet and members of my staff are frequently misquoted or comments are being stated out of context. Neither I, or

members of my staff, have stated that this is “just kids being kids.” We have indicated that this appears to be the actions of juveniles, which the Bermea family has also stated. As you can see in the summary, several neighbors have reported similar incidents of juveniles knocking on doors and windows and of juveniles congregating in neighborhood parks after hours. This activity has declined since we have increased patrols and made contact. A neighborhood resident who is involved in a same sex relationship was contacted and advised that they have not been subjected to any similar activities and have experienced positive relationships with neighbors and others in their neighborhood. There is no evidence to support that the children were threatened by a person with a gun. No gun was actually seen and no threats were made. The occupants of the vehicle made no comments to the children. The children were in a common area late at night. This is an area where suspicious and disruptive activities by juveniles have been reported. They ran and hid when they were illuminated by the headlamps of a passing car. A subject exited the vehicle with an unknown item in his hand. One child thought it could have been a gun, but was not sure. The other two indicated that they did not believe the item was a gun and that it could have been a cell phone or flashlight. Several of the reported incidents involve a neighbor dispute over barking dogs or reports of suspicious activity involving juveniles in the neighborhood, where no contact was made with the Bermea family.

Again, I want to be very clear that we are taking these incidents very seriously and will continue to exhaust all necessary resources to ensure the safety of the Bermea family as well as all other Gilbert residents. Anyone with information in reference to these incidents is encouraged to contact the Gilbert Police Department at (480) 503-6500, or submit a tip via our website (www.gilbertaz.gov/police). Tips can be submitted anonymously.

I hope that you find this information helpful in addressing your questions and concerns.

Thank you

Tim Dorn
Chief of Police
Gilbert Police Department